



NEWS

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas ***L.A. County Board of Supervisors, 2nd District***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 10, 2009

Contact: Aurelio Rojas 213-974-2222

James Bolden 213-200-5314

SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS TO CALL FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO THREE CHILD DEATHS

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, alarmed by the third suspicious death in a month of a child in the county whose treatment had been referred to county officials, said today he will introduce a motion this week calling for an independent investigation into the slayings.

In the latest incident, 2-year-old Jasmine Granados was found dead early Saturday by firefighters who were summoned to a residence in the Athens area. The death of the foster child was preceded by the slayings of two other children -- Dae'von Bailey, 6, and Lars Sanchez, 4 -- whose alleged mistreatment had been referred to the county Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

"The County of Los Angeles must do everything it can to determine what happened in these cases, and what lessons can be learned from these tragic events," the Supervisor said. "To that end, it is necessary to gather and analyze all the facts and circumstances contributing to these children's deaths."

The motion, which will be submitted Wednesday to the Board of Supervisor's Executive Office for consideration at the next week's board meeting, directs the county Auditor Controller, Office of County Investigations, in coordination with the District Attorney and the DCFS to immediately conduct an independent special investigation on the deaths.

“While there will be a Children's Special Investigations Unit with a Lead Attorney and support staff in the near future, we cannot wait,” the Supervisor said. “There is a critical and immediate need for an independent investigation to closely scrutinize all contributing factors, including how DCFS and other involved agencies processed these cases.”

This investigation, the Supervisor said, should include:

- Access to all relevant information in the possession of all County agencies, and private agencies that have contracts with the County, including but not limited to health, mental health, social services, child care, education, law enforcement and probation. Any and all information disclosed shall be kept confidential and not re-disclosed other than in a confidential report to the Board of Supervisors.
- In-person interviews of all witnesses with personal knowledge of any facts and circumstances relevant to the deaths of these children. Any statements of such witnesses shall be kept confidential and not disclosed other than in a confidential report to the Board of Supervisors.
- In-person interviews with leadership personnel in the DCFS, health care providers, law enforcement agencies, and any other entities that had significant contact with these children and/or their families prior to their deaths, to discuss safeguards and procedures currently in place to identify and follow up on indications that a child is at risk of abuse or neglect, and additional safeguards and procedures that might have resulted in more effective intervention in these children's cases. Any statements made by such personnel shall be kept confidential and not disclosed other than in a confidential report to the Board of Supervisors.
- Analysis of the information collected, and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors within 45 days, including action steps to reduce the future risk of preventable child deaths due to abuse or neglect do not continue to occur in Los Angeles County.